ANNUAL ADDRESS

—AT THE—

OPENING OF THE TWENTY-THIRD INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION OF THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE,

—AT THE—

Grand Opera House, August 7, 1888.

Address of R. S. Moore

At the Opening of the Twenty-third Industrial Exhibition of the Mechanics' Institute, at the Grand Opera House, August 7, 1888.

Fellow Mechanics, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is now thirty-three years since this Mechanics' Institute was organized. It is but thirty-eight years since this, the State of California, was admitted to the Federal Union. I think of what we, the mechanics of San Francisco, have achieved in the distinction of lifting ourselves and our occupations to a higher level, with great satisfaction. I look abroad over the State in which we live, over the land in which our destinies have been cast; I reflect upon the conditions surrounding us, the wages we receive, the opportunities we enjoy, the education we have acquired and that afforded for our children; the dress we are enabled to wear, the food we consume, the dwellings in which we live, the social circles in which we move, and thank God that our lot is cast in so delightful and so prosperous a land.

I look over this most respectable audience, owning its own spacious hall, in which it makes yearly exhibit of the handicraft of its members; over the faces of the mechanics' children sparkling with bright intelligence. I reflect that all adult mechanics are units of a great and splendid government, each working man the equal and the peer of every other man in the Republic, and I am reverent in the presence of the Divine author of all these most generous and ennobling gifts, and I thank Him that our lot has been cast in an age so advanced and in a country so supremely blessed.

When I consider all these things, I say to myself, and I have the right to remind you, that these gifts and opportunities are attended with responsibilities and duties from which we have no right to attempt to escape or endeavor to avoid; the first and greatest of these must ever be the necessity of loyalty to the Government and obedience to the law; loyalty to the Government, because it is ours—because under it all men are free, all are equal—all born upon the soil and legally naturalized are clothed with the electoral privilege—all are sovereign. The Government was created by labor, carved by toil from primeval wilderness and virgin prairies; toilers, and the sons of toilers, fought the war in which its

independence was achieved, built the national structure, developed in legislative halls its splendid constitutional fabric, fought its conflict for the emancipation of slaves and for the preservation of the American Union, and stand to-day the guardian of its freedom and the bulwark of its priceless liberties.

We must obey the laws because we make them. The majority of the American people are laborers, laborers with brain and muscle—more with muscle than brains—more at the plough and work-bench and toiling with their hands than in all other occupations beside. The majority rules the Republic under laws made by it. We are the majority, and if we do not respect and obey the laws, who shall? If capital infringes the law, we have the right to correct it. If labor, ignorant, misguided and criminal, attempts to overturn the the laws, we, the majority, within the ranks of labor, must discipline and control it.

The first guiding principle—the cardinal underlying rule of every labor organization—the first thought of every mechanic's mind, ought to be unquestioned obedience to the law. If the laws are wrong, tyrannical or oppressive, it is our fault, for we—if we have not neglected our duties and our opportunities—have made them. If they are imperfectly, or corruptly, or in any any way badly

executed, we are to blame, for we have elected, or had the opportunity to elect, the officials who execute them. There is no safe way of amending or repairing bad laws except by legal modes. Riots are never excusable; anarchy is a crime; communism is indefensible. Under the structure of our organization, where all are equal, all sovereign, and the majority makes the law and executes it, it follows as an inexorable, logical conclusion, that if laws are bad and badly administered, it is the fault of the majority which makes and executes them, and of that majority the intelligent, skilled mechanics and working men of the nation are the most responsible.

The cry against capital is not half a truth, because the great bulk of the nation's vast wealth is owned and enjoyed by the working forces which created it. Wealth is the slave of labor. Gold is of no value while piled in vaults unused—it is worthless. It cannot be moved or used or enjoyed except at the will of labor; and when it moves it earns more for the man who handles it than for the man who owns it. Labor is the master, capital the indispensable, if not the always willing slave. It has some advantages: it may sulk, it may run away, it may refuse to be used, it may hide itself in vaults of steel, which we have been paid to make fire and burglar-

proof—hence it is policy that we should make for its protection just laws, treat it kindly and generously, as all masters should treat their most valuable servants.

Again, proud as we all are of labor, dignified and honorable as we concede it to be, let none of us be so dishonest and hypocritical as not to admit that we would prefer to be millionaires rather than working mechanics. Some time since a weekly journal of San Francisco published the names of one hundred and seven millionaires resident in this city, not one of whom was not a poor and toiling boy, not one of whom was the graduate of a learned university—all had come from the farm, the work-shop, and the humbler walks of working life. Wealth, like the higher prizes of life, is open to the well directed efforts of our boys in this splendid empire of opportunity and in this age most blessed.

This is not a fitting occasion for the introduction of political questions of a partisan character, for there must be times and places where the matters of consideration are of higher and broader importance than what we regard as mere partisan questions; but there is no time and no place where mechanics and skilled laborers can meet when it is not appropriate for them to deliberate on what concerns themselves, their families, and

their future. What promotes and aids labor aids them; what pertains to the rights of labor concerns them; that which dignifies labor gives them dignity; political power and authority give to them weapons for aggression and an armor for defense. These weapons and this armor should never be used except in the right; seldom, if ever, except in self-defense under the law. When oppressions become unendurable, and wrongs irremediable by any legal course of action, then comes the right of revolution and rebellion against the unjust exercise or arbitrary power. This we will not now consider.

How to protect ourselves and how best to promote our own interest without invading the rightful privileges of others, or trespassing upon rights guaranteed to others by law, should be matters which we should most carefully consider. This land of America is ours, and it must be preserved for us, and as the inheritance of our children. Those who are born upon its soil, those who have become citizens by legal adoption, those who are on their way to citizenship through the courts, are equally entitled to all the rights and privileges incident to American citizenship. There can be organized no political party in which all should not have the privilege of membership, voice and equal participation. There should be

no question in the consideration of which the workingman's intelligence should not be consulted, his unselfish and disinterested advice listened to, and his wise admonitions heeded; but there should be no political question which Americans should not have the right to freely consider and openly discuss. The question of tariff for the collection of revenue for the support of government, and, incidentally, for the protection of American industries; the question of foreign immigration, and to what extent it may be regulated and limited; the discriminations which may be made for or against different nationalities and different classes, are properly within the line of political consideration, and there can be no doubt, I think, that the Government of the country has the unquestioned right to determine to what extent foreign immigration may be limited and what undesirable nationalities, or classes, may be entirely excluded from the privilege of residence upon American soil. There can be no doubt of the authority of the Government of the United States to determine whether it will further extend the privilege of the election franchise and whether it will clothe any more men of foreign birth with the sovereignty of citizenship; whether it will not deem it prudent to preserve all that remains of its public domain as the heritage of its increasing

native born millions; whether the principles which govern the educational system, so generously charged with free instruction at the expense of the State, of the sons and daughters of the working families of the nation, should in any respect be changed, and whether there should be encouraged or permitted the establishment of any religious denominational or church power, or ecclesiastical system, Protestant or Catholic, Church of Rome, Church of Jerusalem, Church of England, or Church of America, drawing funds from municipal, State or national treasuries, within the jurisdiction of a Republic, whose organic and fundamental law declares that in this commonwealth there shall be no connection between Church and State.

We look upon England as a country of wise legislation in this respect, and its church has, by an English parliament, within the generation, been disestablished in Scotland and Ireland, while the extension of the principle to Wales and England is now a matter of grave consideration. All these questions come properly within the scope of consideration by intelligent mechanics, because we, in common with all citizens, are charged with the responsibility of their ultimate decision.

When all these matters are contemplated and the condition of the American mechanics deliberately considered, if any one in the United States of America shall ask, is labor honorable and dignified? let the answer be: The creator of the universe was an architect and builder; his only son a carpenter; the first created man a gardener and fruit grower; the apostles, fishermen; the patriarchs, herdsmen; the first navigators—those legendary argonauts searching for the golden fleece, the early explorers, pushing beyond the pillars of Hercules till they discovered America, circumnavigated the globe, found the entrance of the Golden Gate to our golden shores, and beyond exposed India to the commerce of the world—were sailors; Peter, of the great dynasty of the Romanoffs, who laid the foundation of a colossal northern empire, was a ship builder; William, the conqueror of England, married Arletta, the tanner's daughter; Franklin was a printer; Washington, a surveyor; the immortal Lincoln, who preserved the nation that is ours, was a rail-splitter; and Grant, the hero, who fought the battles that preserved the integrity of our nation, was the son of a tanner and himself a toiler.

The skilled mechanics and artisans, to whom and for whom I this day speak, do not suffer by

comparison with any composing the human family in intelligence, morals, patriotism; they compare favorably with the best, bravest and most useful of mankind. May we not in our pride say they are the very foundation of christian civilization? May we not claim, and justly, that without the aid of the practical working mechanic the refinements of Europe would still be left with art, science, and literature undeveloped. That except for the skilled artisans America would remain to-day an undiscovered land, peopled with redmen, clothed in skins, living in caves, and running wild in the primal forests, where they were born, and from which they would have no hope of deliverance.

While we consider the progress of the age and the nation, we may not be unmindful of the fact that the inventors, mechanics and business men of California have not been deficient in their contributions of useful gifts tending to promote the welfare and add to the material comfort and intellectual advancement of the age. Our State of California, lying on the outer border of our national domain, has been linked with steel to our eastern homes, and now the iron horse, feeding upon coal and breathing fire, carries us dashing over mountains and across plains, leaping broad streams and deep ravines, till space is

almost annihilated. California enterprise, and the daring of its pioneers, have achieved the engineering marvel of the century by crossing the continent by rail.

The skill and ingenuity of a San Francisco mechanic has given us the invention of the wire cable and its application to street transportation, till for the purpose of residence and business, our hills are level with the valleys, and our suburban homes so closely and so cheaply connected with our shops and places of business that none but the men of means and leisure can afford the luxury of walking to and from their daily occupations. The street car and dummy is the poor man's carriage, cheaper and more safe, more comfortable and expeditious than the rich man's coach.

San Francisco will, within a few days, send an iron-clad leviathan to the great deep, flying the American flag at her mast-head, evidencing the skill of her mechanics and the resources of the Pacific States. The "Charleston," with her frowning batteries of defense (never to be used, we hope, in aggressive, unjust wars), will, so long as she floats, evidence the fact that our inter-oceanic empire is defensible by the mechanical skill and patriotic courage of its sons of either shore.

From Mount Hamilton, through cloudless heavens that arch its summit, scholarly mathematicians are studying the courses of the stars as they move through firmament of boundless space, and solving the sublime mysteries of the universe through a telescope more powerful and more perfect than elsewhere exists, the contribution of a California mechanic to the science and learning of the world.

Almost at the foot of Mount Hamilton there grows a great university of learning, now and hereafter to be more richly endowed than any college resting upon imperial or royal beneficence. An university where mechanical instruction will be provided for boys and girls, and from which the sons and daughters of no respectable person will be excluded—thus acknowledging the equal rights of all who are gleaners in the great field of human knowledge, of all who are workers and toilers in their endeavor to penetrate the mysteries of the boundless university of human research.

Let us then be justly proud of our calling and our order, proud of our rank among the useful classes. Let us bravely assert our power under the law, and within the law, and according to law, to preserve ourselves, our country and our children from the encroachments of foreign invasion, from

ignorance, superstition, idleness, drunkenness and crime, and from the slavery from which any tyranny, ecclesiastical, civil or political, would endeavor to bind us. Let us fear and avoid the tyranny of ignorance by sending our children to kindergarten schools, where they may play at acquiring the rudiments of education; then to the public schools, where they may be equipped in the intellectual armor of mental and moral defense. Let us demand for them proper legislation of apprenticeship, and let us so teach them in religious and political principles at our own homes and by our own firesides, that we may send them forth fully panoplied for their own defense in the struggle of life, and fully equipped to fight successfully the battles in which Americans must of necessity be involved. Let us for ourselves and for our children recognize the necessity of free conscience, free thought, free expression, free speech, and a free ballot-box for the maintenance of our free Republic, the protection of our properties, and the preservation of our personal liberties. Let us all be proud of our American citizenship, and be ever prepared to offer our lives, our fortunes and our honors in its defense and in defense of the American flag.